



## Monterey County Seat

**O**n September 9, 1850, the State of California was admitted to the Union under the administration of President Millard Fillmore. Monterey served as the County Seat for the newly formed county; Colton Hall functioned as the Court House offices. In 1872, the county seat moved to Salinas.

## Colton Hall School

**T**he school district moved into Colton Hall in 1873 and after altering the building, operated a grade school. In 1875, the *Monterey Herald* commented that "surely the children of Monterey can not fail to imbibe knowledge within such a building, the very air of which is redolent with patriotism and learning." The school moved to a larger building down the street in 1897.



## The Old Monterey Jail



**T**he Old Jail, located at the rear of Colton Hall, was constructed in 1854 and served as the City Jail until 1896. The jail was an impenetrable fortress for its inmates; no one ever escaped from the thick granite walls during its history. The building is open to the public daily.



## Colton Hall Museum

**I**n 1948, the City of Monterey established the Colton Hall Museum, dedicated to the history of the City and the important event which occurred at the site, the Constitutional Convention. The building is open to the public daily, free of charge, from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. A museum attendant is available for tours and information.

### Colton Hall Museum

Pacific Street between Jefferson and Madison  
Monterey, California 93940 408-646-3851  
Open Daily 10:00 to 5:00 Free Admission



## Walter Colton



Soon after the American occupation of California in 1846, the Reverend Walter Colton was appointed to serve as alcalde or Chief Magistrate of the Monterey district. Reverend Colton, a chaplain for the U.S. Navy, served as the first American alcalde in California from 1846 until 1849. During his three years, Colton impaneled the first jury in California, co-founded the first

newspaper published in this State, and directed the construction of the first American public building in California, Colton Hall.



## Colton Hall

In his diary, published later as *Three Years in California*, Walter Colton notes: "Thursday, March 8, 1849: The town hall, on which I have been at work for more than a year, is at last finished. It is built of a white stone, quarried from a neighboring hill, and which easily takes the shape you desire. The lower apartments are for schools; the hall over them — seventy four by thirty — is for public assemblies. The front is ornamented with a portico, which you enter from the hall. It

is not an edifice that would attract any attention among public buildings in the United States; but in California it is without a rival. It has been erected out of the slender proceeds of town lots, the labor of the convicts, taxes on liquor shops, and fines on gamblers. The scheme was regarded with incredulity by many; but the building is finished, and the citizens have assembled in it, and christened it after my name, which will now go down to posterity with the odor of gamblers, convicts, and tipplers. I leave it as an humble evidence of what may be accomplished by rigidly adhering to one purpose, and shrinking from no personal efforts necessary to its achievement."

## Constitutional Convention

Between the first of September and the thirteenth of October, 1849, Colton Hall was the site of a convention called by Governor Wiley, to draft California's first Constitution. As reported by Hazard Taylor of the *New York Herald-Tribune* "the building was probably the only one in California suited to the purpose." Forty-eight delegates elected from ten



districts debated complicated issues such as the location of the eastern boundary line — the Sierra Nevada Mountains or the Rocky Mountains. Slavery was forbidden in this historic document and after some heated discussions, San Jose chosen as the first State Capital. Before voting, each resolution and article was translated into Spanish for the benefit of the eight delegates who spoke only that language. Hazard Taylor described the final day of the Convention in his newspaper story on October 13, 1849, "The members met this morning at the usual hour to perform the last duty that remained to them — that of signing the Constitution. They were all in the happiest humor, and the morning was so bright and balmy that no one seemed disposed to call an organization. Eventually, they were called to order, and they proceeded to affix their names to the completed Constitution. At this moment, a signal was given: the American colors ran up the flagstaff in front of the



the bay. At last, as the loud ring of the thirty-first was heard, there was a shout: "That's for California!"

